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N U P E R

You have the recency of me  
your earthenware bowl  
left out on the stone terrace  
caught all the stars.

17 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

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Things come to life pens  
fill themselves with ink  
Southampton Row a nice  
Jewish man sells you  
a soft red sweater.  
In our lingo that means  
the sun is shining on the sea.

17 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

NATVRA ABHORRET VACVVM

When the land heats up under the morning sun  
the air above it rises.  
Cool air drifts or rushes in from the sea  
depending. Noonday cooler than dawn.  
This is called *Brise marine*. Breath of ocean  
in shadowy close dingles full of twisted little trees.

17 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

## WAXED TWINE, NAUTICAL

To put it mildly, a log on the lawn.  
Shrouded bullseye waiting for the solstice—  
here is my mast, my sails  
are in these nylon bags, marry me.

In my proper element  
I will run about the bay all Thermidor  
with a gull on my mast and a hat  
on your head makes you look like a duck,

thank god for weather,  
the only vacation of the poor.  
And everyday's a holiday from yesterday—  
the sea is one fat consolation.

17 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

# JUST BEFORE LEAVING THE ISLAND

*for Charlotte*

Last night of the weather.  
Later a time comes when the owl  
Gives no answers, the snake  
Does not withdraw in sluggish esses  
From my nearby foot. I appear  
No longer in the matter. In matter.  
To undisturb the world of my passage,  
Get everything she has to offer  
Then unpiece it loving into clarity.  
For you. For you. For you.

17 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

## THE SIMILE

Like a Brahmin coming down the hill  
a mild amazement  
wound of cloth  
around his head

and his hands  
holding only  
a bag of money

the sea comes in.

17 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk, Barges Beach

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Her mirror tarnished  
some mist with Sun some  
where up in it

and otherwhile a morning flavor  
clings to the glials  
along my cruising thought

a drool of pondweed where I fed.  
All night the wordless revel:

Get up and walk the dog

—Don't got no dog.

It's a collie, do it.

—Golden, isn't.

It needs the exercise, like a foreign language.

—I forget.

But there is something that has to be done,  
some mirror turned  
to fetch the best reflection

No, you have to get up and write it down.

—What?

The book you've been complaining all these years.

—What book is that, o flesh?

*The Mirror of Injustice* you call it, or *The Sword of Sullenness*, or  
*What Is To Be Done*, or *The Little Things That Make Life Hell*.



—I know no such books.

[Rolls over, turning his back to the sun.]

They are all the things you've ever complained about, all your life long. Did you think nobody noticed?

—Nobody cared.

Nobody's there to care, but everybody's there to notice. Now you have to write it down,, in messy blue ink on a diner napkin, the list of all of them.

—All what?

The heat. The flies. The weather in general and specific. The food. The thirst. The noise. The dust. The inconsiderateness of other people, all of them. The mortal horror of unchosen music. The sun. The mosquitoes. The cold. The color. The clothes. The car, don't forget the car. The neighbors. Your teeth. The windows stuck. The guitar, on principle. The colored people. The teachers. The trains. The clocks. The garbagemen. The dentists. The police. The environment. The fascists. The landlord. The banks. The big companies. The media. Your friends. Your body. Your boss. Your wife. Your memory.

—They're all gone except the noise.

Write about the noise, call it *The Book of Silence Lost in a Storm at Sea Far Inland Because Electric Weather*. It hums like flies.

—How can I write down a reflection?

Use the glass  
that is your eyes

silver it  
with thought

and let the quick shadows  
fall on the stodgy page

we can read what's left.  
Call it the names of everyone you knew.

18 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

## AT THE WINDOW

Things fit by friction  
to assemble.  
Thick thighs, an apple.  
Be careful, the world  
made by looking  
is a strange false city.  
The senses  
are not the evidence.  
They are the crime.

18 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

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The word trestle carries  
black steam locomotives of my childhood  
over shallow lagoons at sunset forever.

18 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

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In sparrow quiet mist  
churning at the heart I think  
action is my shame  
I am a carrier  
on a warm sea  
jets take off from me  
to destroy the quiet  
world of all that does  
not love me. Anger.

18 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

W A N N S E E

Whoever I am  
I have always had the knack  
of catching eyes.  
They see me when I come in,  
they are afraid.

They hate all the kinds I am.  
They hate me for being circumcised, vagrant,  
artist, sexed, unsexed, for being at peace,  
for having no politics. For not being interested  
in them—the ultimate treason.  
Who does not share their interests  
must be destroyed.

They could tell

I found them boring,  
their bland sense of ritual and display,  
their shallow histories, these  
rustic Robespierres swathed in bunting.  
Their cross was crooked, but they did know how to kill.

18 June 1993  
Cuttyhunk

## COMING BACK TO MAINLAND

dinner in  
drove up to  
Lowell  
Laotian  
beef Cam-  
bodian quail  
trussed out  
on lettuce  
little crucifixes  
the crisp revenges  
of the orient

islands  
are so cautious the  
mainland  
copious detailed  
the movement  
of things  
interviews me

dratted summer cold  
follows us home  
kept me awake  
most of the hottest  
night this summer  
naked beside you  
my dearest  
only at dawn cool  
enough to rest  
my head bothering  
the pale geology  
of your spine

I love the way you sleep.

19 June 1993, Boston

## THE OLDEST PEOPLE

The drunks of Lawrence and Lowell  
gaze from their porches out at the traffic  
gentle muddy Irish faces waiting  
for the violence inside them to come out and break their lives.

These are my people. Their skin is mine, we  
are the colored people, the beef of Irish faces  
pale only round the eyes with long desire foiled.  
Patchy purple clouds, hot day coming, how wrongly

we are prepared for such weather, we Cro-Magnons  
of cave and coracle. The body.  
We have come to the wrong place, we believe  
nothing, everything hurts us, a bruise sings.

We have come to the end of all the islands.  
It is terrible to be so old in a new place.

19 June 1993  
Boston



## THE VOICE OF THE RESISTANCE

shadow answers  
come from underbrush

a tree a seaside person  
and in the hot interior  
airless dry in shade  
mustachioed on every branch with catkins  
and leaves like bay leaves, not *laurus*

*nobilis*, a kind of tree,  
the maquis  
waiting for the eternal gestapo  
everywhere.

Time is a valley of revenge.

Ballet of vengeance,  
whose men run through the thicket  
showing mostly the whites of their eyes

murder to heal murder,  
a gear in the teeth of a gear.

The wheel of silence  
that crushes the fact of things,

and the truth is gone.  
Bousquet murdered to keep the old  
truth from being new.  
A tin box full of old matches  
still can strike.

Soft fire,  
she brought  
a flute home  
from the ocean

and played at midnight  
a sad song on it,

Lament  
for Limerick,  
“my city, dying.”

Finches starve for seed.  
The resistance  
is everything.

Conjugations of arid minerals,  
child us an ocean. Here spell, hydrogen.

Nitro breathe in, a blue jay lands,  
some purple finger nails at the checkout  
“my girl friend  
did them for me,”  
I laugh at her, she blushes, insists, “my  
girl friend did them,”

summer Sunday,  
blue flower of chicory

*& Colour hath no Soliditie, is but a Sheen or  
Circumstance upon an Instant seene, a Shewing...*

20 June 1993

SAY WHEN

So that we know what we mean  
when we say when  
and the foam hurls over the rim  
down someone's chin  
a miracle that other people do it too.  
That we don't do this all alone.

21 June 1993

# VEL D'HIV

Look round you  
We have come here  
For no reason  
But being

We hear no other  
Language but our own  
For being us  
The children scream

Knowing better  
What it means  
The steps are slippery  
with our insides

We are quiet  
With our business  
The long forgetting  
We were ever here.

21 June 1993

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Mosaic of the blue jay's back  
window pane in where have I seen  
not so old cathedral lady chapel worship  
the history of what happens to the light  
Louis Comfort Tiffany.

21 June 1993

## LANDSCAPE WITH PARROT

Everybody wants to see a bright bird  
sitting in everybody's tree full of yellow and red  
blue green a tropic tantrum of colors  
quivering in an otherwise mute maple backyard.

Feathers. Vibrato of or behavior of the  
light. We try to give everybody what everybody wants  
(sea-view guaranteed in Cancun says hotel ad)  
and walk with them along the promen(esplan)ade

watching the shivery antics of the poor. O fear  
of law (people telling people what to do) and war  
(killing them if they don't do it). Universals are few  
but one of them is the bright bird everybody wants.

21 June 1993

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The supervisor of bird baths  
has a look at this one.  
A parade of finches rehearses its routine.  
Cars shout along over the hill.  
This could have been the world,  
a sick man studying his hands.

21 June 1993

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Climb quietly towards me. The humid  
necessities. In dream she fired a dueling pistol  
straight at my chest. I took the ball  
in sternum or heart and must have died.  
She sighted as she fired. I saw as I fell.

21 June 1993